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ACTION: DAO
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DISSEMINATION: DAOO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 004045

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/I, NEA/ARPI
ALSO FOR S/I AMB JAMES JEFFREY
NSC FOR CHARLES DUNNE
TREASURY FOR LARRY MCDONALD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2015
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [SA](#) [SY](#) [PK](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: MBZ ON IRAQ, EXTREMISM, PALESTINIANS, SAUDIS

REF: A. ABU DHABI 4025

[1](#)B. STATE 175071
[1](#)C. ABU DHABI 713

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) told Ambassador and a visiting delegation led by retired U.S. four-star generals over dinner September 20 that he expected the Iraqi people would approve a new Constitution on October 15. MbZ reiterated his support for former Iraqi PM Iyad Allawi as the person best suited to lead Iraq. He advised against a premature U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraq. He further indicated that the Iraqis would probably be receptive to having certain Arab forces on their soil, but he criticized Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa sharply

for blocking such initiatives in the past. He offered insights about the threat of Islamic extremism in the UAE and the region, and identified Hizballah as a greater terrorist threat than Al Qaida. MbZ also commented on prospects for Middle East peace, Saudi Arabia's leadership, and Pakistan President Musharraf's strong stance against terrorism. End Summary

¶2. (SBU) On September 20, a delegation from the Business Executives for National Security (BENS) led by the organization's president and chief executive officer, General (Ret.) Charles G. Boyd, met with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed primarily to discuss the security and political situation in Iraq. BENS visited the UAE at the urging of CENTCOM Commander General Abizaid. General Boyd was accompanied by General (Ret.) Wayne Downing, Chairman, Combating Terrorism Center; James Kimsey, Founding Chairman of AOL; Joseph Robert, real estate developer; Eric Flanning, BENS Strategic Development Senior Vice President; and Lt. Col. David Dawson, CENTCOM action officer. Also attending the meeting were Ambassador, USLO Chief, and Pol Chief. MbZ was accompanied by UAE Commander of Special Forces, General Juma, and MbZ advisers Yousef Al Otaiba and Jack McGuinness.

Referendum on Iraq's Constitution

¶3. (C) The BENS delegation asked MbZ for his views on the October 15 referendum on the Iraqi Constitution, and on the likelihood of Sunni support. MbZ said he believed the Iraqis would adopt a new Constitution. He recommended the U.S. try to "get the maximum percentage of Sunnis to support it." Ambassador thanked MbZ for UAEG efforts to engage the Iraqis on supporting the political process. MbZ then noted his support for former Iraqi PM Iyad Allawi as "the only" Iraqi political figure capable of holding the country together. Iraqi officials needed laws to punish corrupt officials, said MbZ, citing Ahmed Chalabi specifically. He pointedly criticized the USG for "bringing in rogue people to run Iraq."

U.S. Forces in Iraq

¶4. (C) Delegation members solicited ideas on how the Bush Administration could explain to the American public why the U.S. military should remain in Iraq, particularly now that the public sees the massive reconstruction effort that is required in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. MbZ contended that the situation in Iraq would be "much worse" if U.S. forces were to withdraw prematurely. From an energy perspective, "you would need to have the capability to produce the amount of oil and gas you are pumping from the (Iraqi) soil." From a security perspective, a premature withdrawal could cause upheaval in the whole region. "It's a real danger," MbZ said. Ambassador previewed the upcoming visit of Ambassador Jeffrey and team to discuss with the UAEG how we can strengthen mutual efforts in support of Iraq. (Note: She had previewed the Jeffrey visit September 18 with MbZ's brother, MinState for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan)-ref A. End note.)

Arab Forces in Iraq

¶5. (C) The BENS delegation asked what the USG could do to reach out to the Arab world to persuade Arabs to help in Iraq. "Your problem in the Arab world is not with the Arab world; it's with (Arab League Secretary General) Amr Moussa," MbZ said, criticizing Moussa for blocking any initiative that included other Arab states assisting Iraq. He said Moussa twice lobbied against GCC proposals to deploy a GCC force to Iraq. Without Moussa at the helm of the Arab League, "you could find a breakthrough with every Arab nation," MbZ opined. He said Moroccan, Tunisian, and Yemeni troops might be acceptable to the Iraqis, but not Egyptians or Syrians. (Note: Later in the dinner conversation, MbZ suggested having the Saudis and Egyptians send "a couple of divisions" to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The

UAE has approximately 250 Special Operations troops in Afghanistan at present.)

Iraq's Insurgency

¶6. (C) Ambassador highlighted the need for continued pressure on Syria to respect Iraqi sovereignty, and asked for UAE assistance in this regard. The BENS delegation and MbZ both expressed concern about the potential for the insurgency in Iraq overflowing into Jordan. MbZ noted the impact Jordan's collapse would have on Israel. In MbZ's estimation, King Abdullah is "the only one who could hold Jordan together." MbZ noted that he heard from his brother Sheikh Hamdan that Ambassador had urged continued UAE support to Jordan to ease fuel cost pressures there (ref A). (Note: We believe the final decision on additional UAE cash assistance to Jordan now rests with President Khalifa. End note.)

Countering Islamic Extremism in the Region

¶7. (C) MbZ devoted much of his reflection to the threat of Islamic extremism and the UAE's efforts to combat it. He warned of dangerous repercussions for the region should the Saudi regime collapse, saying it constituted a greater threat to the UAE than a nuclear-capable Iran. He dismissed Saudi claims that they were succeeding in combating extremist militants. How can you say you are successful when Saudi security forces have thus far failed to stop the militants' operations, he asked. In contrast, as soon as the UAEG learned who was responsible for the September 11 attacks in the United States, it acted immediately to counter Islamic radicalization in the UAE.

¶8. (C) MbZ said he considered Hizballah a more dangerous organization than Al Qaida, echoing what his brother Abdullah, the UAE's Information Minister, told S/CT Coordinator Henry Crumpton in New York September 14 (ref B). (Comment: During her visit to the UAE on February 7, White House Homeland Security Adviser Fran Townsend told Director of UAE State Security Department Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed that Iran needed to stop sponsoring terrorism and cease supporting Hizballah, and she requested any UAE cooperation in that regard) ref C. Hazza had agreed to ongoing operational cooperation in the UAE targeting Hizballah and Iranian MOIS. End comment)

¶9. (C) MbZ said that he believed in a free press, but was concerned that people in the Middle East were "not getting" a free press. In part, this is because terrorists had gotten the upper hand and used the Internet and television to promote their agenda, he said. MbZ underscored the importance of moderate Islamic teachings as a counterweight to extremist ideology. "If you ground is solid, there is no problem," he said. MbZ said he also supports the idea of introducing democratic reforms, such as elections, to the region, as long as Islamic extremists did not win a majority. "We will have it in our own time. ... I have no problem with an elected government. But will it make things worse or better?" Kimsey praised the UAE for taking a leadership role in combating extremism and serving as a model for other Arab states.

Middle East Peace

¶10. (C) On Middle East peace, MbZ urged support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in his efforts to gain a stronger grip on Hamas and Islamic Jihad. MbZ also hailed the Gaza disengagement as a "brave move" on the part of the Israelis. In response to Ambassador's question about Prime Minister Sharon's statement at UNGA regarding Arab acceptance of Israel, MbZ said it was "not a smart move" and asked rhetorically what Sharon's objective was. MbZ said there needs to be a "breakthrough" to achieve a two-state solution, characterizing the current state of the peace process as being akin to "bargaining in a fish market."

Saudi Leadership

¶11. (C) MbZ also took a jab at Saudi Arabia's aging leadership, saying the Kingdom "needs a retirement system," and adding that Prince Bandar was the only one effective Saudi interlocutor.

Pakistani Leadership

¶12. (C) Noting President Musharraf's address at UNGA, MbZ praised the Pakistani leader for "taking tough positions" against terrorism in the face of tough neighbors. MbZ expressed some concern about Musharraf's longevity, but did not elaborate.

¶13. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
SISON